

recibe, con este trabajo, una introducción, que esperamos su autora se decida a continuar.

Más importante e irritante es el descuido con que se ha compuesto la edición, el lector tendrá que sufrir el enojo de nombres de autor sin mención de título de obra (Fernández Quintanilla, pp. 95, 96, 183), o títulos sin autor, o doble versión de título (Backmann y Piland), o nombres no incluidos en el índice onomástico (P. de Alcántara García, p. 289), o incluidos por duplicado (Harris, Luisa Roldán), o sencillamente citados erróneamente (F. Alcántara, n. 258), o con varias ortografías, como, por ejemplo, Bachmann, citado también como Backmann, cuya obra no se cita, a pesar de incluir una referencia, *op. cit.*, en la página 285. Caso especial es el de Harris y Nochlin (también citado como Nochlin y Harris), que aparecen conjuntamente y por separado sin cita de obra, a pesar de que se hace referencia y cita de páginas. En otros casos (Tartilán, p. 153 s.) falta el lugar de la edición de la obra citada. Todo ello información que el lector interesado deberá ir recogiendo penosamente a lo largo de su lectura de este libro pobremente editado.

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VICENTE CANTARINO

CREACION

Pilar Pedraza. *La fase del rubí*. Barcelona, Tusquets Editores, 1987, 205 pp.

In her most recent novel, Pilar Pedraza, a professor of art history at the University of Valencia, has very effectively created the atmosphere of a seventeenth-century Castilian city, bringing her knowledge of the art and history of that time into play. Beyond the realistic recreation of a past era, however, Pedraza portrays for us the air of supernatural and demonical happenings associated with the superstition and mystery of the beliefs of that time and the role of the Inquisition in searching out the «truth».

The novel consists of forty chapters, the majority of which are narrated from the omniscient point of view and in the past tense. Fourteen of them, however, are told in the first person, from the

viewpoint of the present, by one of the central figures, Imperatrice, half-sister of Torcuato, an official of the Inquisition. Each chapter relates a single event, without transitions between chapters, thereby forcing the reader to make connections and to try to determine the relationship between these varying happenings. This technique adds further intrigue to a rather complicated plot.

The author displays a great talent for description, at the same time writing in a succinct and clear prose. The mixture of reality and fantasy prevails throughout the text; passages which paint a glorious scene in nature may terminate in the gory, passionate and ritualistic sacrifice of a slaughtered animal. The narration is frequently broken by humorous situations, such as the frustrations of Torcuato, whose bureaucratic work with the Holy Office constantly interferes with his dedication to completing his translation of Tacitus, or the mixed feelings of an English prisoner in the jail, who prefers his life of confinement to returning to his wife and father-in-law in England.

Imperatrice, whose name is appropriate to her manner, is a beautiful and disquieting woman. Her dissimilar eyes—one blue, one green—give her an unusual, passionate look. The chapters that she narrates deal with extraordinary experiences in which she shows herself to be a fearless woman, capable of defying the forces of evil, even to the point of going beyond the bounds of normality. Her lust, her thirst for blood, her fascination with cats and other felines to the point of taking on their appearance at times, and her courage and dignity regardless of circumstances reveal an enigmatic and intriguing character.

The principal male characters, Torcuato, the priest, Losada, and the bishop, Barrientos, are engrossed in attempting to explain certain unusual occurrences in the city, such as the nocturnal visits by the devil to Sor Blanca de San Miguel and the charges of witchcraft against Antida Colás brought by María González. In administering justice and punishing the guilty parties, they find themselves in occasional disagreements and moral dilemmas.

These mysterious happenings are further confused by the strange events that occur in the house of Imperatrice, particularly the disappearance of the innocently beautiful young women whom she brings there as her attendants. Toward the end of the novel, after Imperatrice's arrest by the Inquisition, we learn their fate

and the role played by her resident physician, Dr. Plájowitz, in the unfolding of their drama.

The ambiguity of the story and of Imperatrice herself is never resolved. After a passionate affair with her executioner, appropriately named Amador, who is an equally exotic individual with one blue eye and one green one, Imperatrice disappears as a flash of lightning strikes the pyre on which she is to be burned. Her brother is left with a discontent which seems to grow like a cancer and which he cannot explain. As all of us, he is condemned only to be able to see himself as in the distorted image of a mirror.

Pedraza has created a captivating story of great contrasts of beauty, perversion and bloodshed. The fusion of the dark, almost Medieval, world with the elegance and splendor of Imperatrice's palace is often shocking and overwhelming to the reader. The symbolic names and the possibility for allegorical readings give the potential for various interpretations. It will be interesting to see what Pedraza's fertile mind and extensive background will produce next.

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Carles Casajuana. *Top d'Escopeta*. Barcelona, Ed. Quaderns Cremá, 1987, 256 pp.

La literatura catalana, y en especial la novela, sigue dando pruebas de vitalidad y de un espíritu innovador, inquieto, aventurero. *Tap d'Escopeta* (entre paréntesis, el título es la autodefinición del autor, que habla en primera persona a lo largo de la novela, y significa «objeto dispensable y algo ridículo») es un relato rápido, nervioso, incluso vertiginoso y caótico, centrado alrededor de las experiencias emocionales, intelectuales y sexuales —sobre todo sexuales— de un joven que hace el inventario de su vida y sus aventuras, sin omitir sus fracasos (una posible traducción del título, «Tap d'Escopeta», podría ser: «Una vida inútil»). El héroe vive plenamente la vida bohemia de la Barcelona nocturna «en unos años en que de pronto todo parecía posible», reconoce su capacidad y su talento para el fracaso, y decide seguir fracasando como medio de asumir plenamente su propia personalidad. Esta es la primera novela de Casajuana, diplomático de carrera, nacido en 1954, y esperamos